



CHOOSE RESPECT

Developing Healthy Relationships: A Role for Adolescents

Healthy relationships are built on a foundation of respect. This means that both people can talk openly, honestly and freely to each other – without feeling pressure to act or think a certain way. People in healthy relationships give-and-take. They take turns making decisions, support each other and talk things through to make sure both people are heard.

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Healthy relationships are a choice. But to get respect you have to give it and adolescents can start by learning key skills that will help them give and get respect in any relationship they have.

- **Anger Control:** Think before speaking, especially when angry. Take a deep breath or walk away until calmer. Never express anger through physical violence. Be aware that anger can be a cover-up for other emotions and look for the underlying reason.
- **Problem Solving:** Break the problem down into manageable pieces. Identify possible solutions. Consider the likely outcome(s) for each possible solution.
- **Negotiation and Compromise:** Look at problems objectively, acknowledging differing points of view. Strive to find “win-win” solutions. Realize that healthy relationships involve give and take on both sides.
- **Assertiveness:** Be clear and open about feelings and expectations. Respect one's own needs as well as those of others. Don't confuse assertiveness with aggression. Aggression is a violent way of expressing feelings and expectations. Assertiveness is an honest and courageous way to express oneself.
- **Fighting fair:** Recognize that all relationships have disagreements, but how partners deal with conflict is important to the health of the relationship. Stick to the subject, avoid insults, and don't bring up past hurts. Understand that it's OK to excuse oneself and return to the discussion when calmer.
- **Understanding:** Take a minute to understand what others might be feeling – put yourself in their shoes. It can improve your communications skills and help form healthy relationships.
- **Listening:** Don't just talk, listen. Keep the lines of communication open. Allow others to express their opinions without forcing yours on others to win an argument.
- **Being a Role Model:** Take every opportunity to show respect for others. Help others to see where they agree and disagree. This will help everyone know how to choose respect.

By using these skills adolescents choose respect – and choose to treat others the way they want to be treated.

For more information about Choose Respect go to www.chooserespect.org.